

State Representative Bob Bischoff

Helping Hoosier Families

113th Indiana General Assembly, Spring 2004

Session Report



Property
Tax Relief



Prescription
Assistance



Job
Creation





113th General Assembly Ends

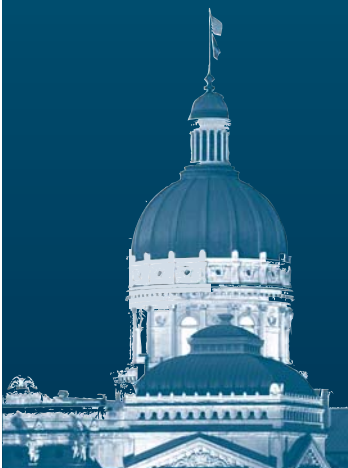
Dear Friends,

The 2004 short session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended. I have detailed several important pieces of legislation in this newsletter, including property tax relief, job creation and increased access to affordable prescription drugs.

I hope you find this information useful, and I will keep you updated over the next few months on other legislation that should have a positive impact on you and your family. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about state government.

Sincerely,

Bob Bischoff



Property Tax Relief

When the Indiana General Assembly restructured our state's tax code in 2002, one goal from that effort was to give homeowners relief from the court-ordered reassessment. As the first series of assessments was completed, it became apparent that homeowners were facing an increasingly larger share of the burden passed to them by Indiana's courts.

Because of their concerns, House members led an effort to begin the 2004 session ahead of time. Starting in November, legislators began discussions on additional reforms that resulted in passage of Senate Enrolled Act 1, which contains nearly **\$500 million in protection for homeowners, businesses and farms from property tax increases**. It provides additional protections from both the court-ordered reassessment and unchecked local property tax increases.

When lawmakers returned in January, our efforts resumed to give tax relief to the people who needed it the most. We were able to pass another

measure (Senate Enrolled Act 296) that increases **property tax deductions for seniors on lower incomes, veterans, the blind and disabled**, as well as those who are rehabilitating homes.

House
Enrolled Act

1005 takes additional steps to find other means of financing government services. One study committee will explore alternatives to the property tax, while another will examine the efficiency of local government operations. This measure also sets up the groundwork for keeping property taxpayers better informed. A pilot program getting under way in 2005 will provide taxpayers in certain counties with detailed breakdowns on their **tax statements that will show where their tax dollars are being used**.

Additionally, people who are financing or refinancing a home will be given information on the types of tax deductions available.

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Bischoff authors important legislation

Rep. Bischoff authored **House Bill 1072** this session which requires that a person using regulated explosives must obtain a license from the state fire marshal before doing so. The law will apply to the use of regulated explosives by blasters whose work involves construction and road projects, setting standards for the training and licensing of blasters to ensure the safe and proper use of certain explosives.

Regulated explosives are very dangerous and should only be handled by trained and authorized individuals. The careless management of regulated explosives results in too many tragic accidents, and the provisions of this legislation should prevent many of those accidents from happening. The bill will also authorize the state fire marshal to perform on-site inspections to check that blasters are in compliance with the rules.

Bischoff also authored **House Bill 1070** which will establish the Center for Agricultural Science and Heritage, also known as "The Barn", as a corporate body separate from the state. Operational funding for The Barn currently is provided with funds raised through its associated non-profit agency.

This bill essentially changes the language of state law to provide consistency with the State Fair Commission. It has been endorsed by the State Fair Advisory Committee and the Indiana Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development.

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Additional Bills Passed

There were several other significant pieces of legislation passed by the General Assembly.

House Bill 1029 will allow a custodial parent to bring a court action to **recover delinquent child support payments** by intercepting the state income tax return of the parent responsible for the obligation.

House Bill 1229, called The Indiana Homeowner Protection Act, places **tougher restrictions on the practice called predatory lending**. Homeowners will be protected from overpriced loans with unreasonable terms that often are impossible to pay back, placing people at risk of losing their homes through foreclosure.

House Bill 1449 will help **restore the constitutionality of Indiana's curfew law** by including provisions that protect minors who are exercising First Amendment rights.

House Bill 1178 will allow courts to create a program **permitting volunteers to become advocates for seniors**.

Probate courts will be allowed to appoint trained and supervised volunteers to serve as guardians for a limited time to incapacitated or protected elderly who are at-risk inpatients in health care facilities in Indiana.

House Bill 1306 will allow members, survivors, and beneficiaries of the **Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF)** and Teacher's Retirement Fund (TRF) to receive a **cost-of-living adjustment** beginning in 2005.

House Bill 1171 creates a statewide **Stroke Prevention Task Force** to develop several prevention initiatives. The task force will develop and implement a statewide public education program and provide specific prevention strategies for healthcare professionals, and guidelines on helping and handling stroke patients.

House Bill 1044 enforces a mandatory \$5,000 fine for any employee of the Indiana Department of Correction or a penal facility who is caught **trafficking tobacco products** with an inmate.



Medication Savings

Hoosiers Gain Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs

Legislators also worked hard to protect Hoosiers from the rising costs of prescription drugs. Under a plan approved this session, more than **400,000 Hoosiers would gain access to affordable prescription drugs**, with many more qualifying in years to come.

House Bill 1265 enables the state to set up an aggregate prescription drug purchasing program to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs from phar-

maceutical companies. **Indiana will also be able to enter into joint purchasing agreements with other states, gaining added bargaining power.**

People who sign up for the program will get a prescription drug card to receive the savings when they fill their prescriptions at their local drugstores. This program will simplify the lives of many and improve the conditions for people on fixed and limited incomes.



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Representative Bob Bischoff (right) reviews legislation on the floor of the House chamber with Representative Paul Robertson.

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Creating Hoosier Jobs

Protecting and creating Hoosier jobs and businesses were among the issues of most concern in the 2004 General Assembly. Three bills and a resolution were passed that will aid in the retention and creation of jobs as well as encourage business development and corporate responsibility.

House Resolution 47 calls on the president and Congress to address a growing trade imbalance that has resulted in the loss of more than 2 million manufacturing jobs in the U.S. since 2001. It asks that **trade agreements require that corporations pay fair and competitive wages**, respect the rights of workers to unionize, and adopt workplace safety and

**House Bill 1080
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services**

anti-pollution standards equal to those in our country. The resolution also encourages the federal government to **provide economic incentives to sectors that have seen record job losses** due to NAFTA, and address the adverse effects on trade caused by countries that artificially lower the value of their currency relative to the dollar.

House Bill 1080 will help **stimulate Indiana's economy** by providing a price preference to Indiana businesses for public works and procurement contracts. This piece of legislation will focus on Indiana companies first as suppliers for goods and services the state is interested in purchasing.

House Bill 1434 **will benefit low-income businesses by fostering economic development opportunities** by providing grants for training and technical assistance. The microenterprise partnership program created under the bill will provide assistance to businesses with fewer than five employees.

House Bill 1365 will make the state's research and development tax credit permanent, extend the life of the Hoosier Business Investment Tax Credit and create a new fund to encourage investment in new technology. It also calls for a study of **eliminating corporate tax loopholes in current Indiana law** that cause tax increases on Hoosier homeowners and businesses.

Rep. Bob Bischoff

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